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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001013

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AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

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TAGS: PREL PHUM ELAB KTIP EAID UZ

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: NEW IOM REGIONAL HEAD OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FORMAL  
REGISTRATION

REF: TASHKENT 343

CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy P. Buckley, Second Secretary, Department of  
State, Political and Economic Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On June 16, poloffs met with regional officials from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and a prominent Uzbek anti-trafficking NGO to discuss the organization's status. A new IOM regional coordinator will cover all of Central Asia for IOM, and he is confident that mistakes made by the previous country representative can be resolved and that Uzbekistan will soon register IOM. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Poloffs met on June 16 with Zlatko Zigic, the new Astana-based IOM Regional Coordinator for Central Asia. Zigic is familiar with Central Asia from previous tours in Ashgabat and Bishkek, and he explained that IOM wanted to shift its structure to create a regional hub focused just on the five former Soviet Central Asian republics rather than cover this region from its Islamabad office. He is confident this will result in better project management as well as more regional projects on TIP and labor migration.

¶3. (C) IOM is still not registered in Uzbekistan, although Zigic is optimistic that this will happen soon. He candidly noted (please protect) that the former Almaty-based IOM Director for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Mahmoud Naderi, was relieved of his duties for "wrongdoings and mismanagement." (Note: Zigic said that, although Naderi was responsible for oversight of USG-funded activities in Uzbekistan, that the programs here were not impacted.) Unfortunately, the previously reported effort (reftel) to seek registration in Uzbekistan was adversely impacted by Naderi's mishandling of the appropriate paperwork. Thus, the awkward long-term absence of IOM in Uzbekistan is not all the fault of the government.

¶4. (SBU) In addition to cleaning up the mess from the erstwhile Uzbekistan director, Zigic also must contend with the ghosts of Andijon, as he mentioned that the Government of Uzbekistan has not

forgotten that it was IOM which played a central role in transporting Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan to Romania in the aftermath of the incidents in 2005. Nonetheless, Zivic said government officials had indicated that they could accomplish the registration formalities very quickly and a meeting is scheduled for June 17 with the MFA's UN and International Organizations Department. Zivic pointed to the rapid issuance of his multiple-entry, one-year Uzbek visa as a sign the government is ready to back up its encouraging talk with swift action on a fresh registration package. "No one at IOM has ever gotten a visa this quickly," he added. Zivic also stated that he does not expect the Uzbeks to insist on a reduced mandate to prevent another situation in which IOM transports Uzbek citizens.

15. (C) Should IOM receive accreditation, Zivic expects to have chief of mission status and open up a new mission in Tashkent that he would regularly visit. He assured polooffs that IOM would continue to rely on the impressive network of NGOs that already operate in the country, chiefly former TIP Report Hero Nodira Karimova's "Istiqbolli Avlod" (Future Generation), which is presently the project implementer for USG-funded anti-TIP projects. "This restructuring will help us draw a new road map," Zivic commented, "and registration would mean we no longer would have to bring money to the NGO in a suitcase" due to the operating restrictions.

16. (SBU) IOM regional officials have been very impressed by how

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well linked Istiqbolli Avlod and its local partner NGOs around the country are with law enforcement agencies. This work has continued in the framework of the no-cost extension as part of the INL project, and IOM was pleased by a recent study tour for officers and NGO officials to Poland. In July, there is also a planned trip to Ankara, Turkey, to increase contacts between Uzbek and Turkish law enforcement agencies since it is a common trafficking destination with visa-free travel for Uzbek nationals. IOM is also planning to work with the World Bank on a joint regional project to address HIV and migration, and Zivic hopes Uzbekistan recognizes projects like this will be in its best interest.

Comment:

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17. (SBU) We strongly support IOM's efforts to obtain registration in Uzbekistan, which would add one more international organization to the mix in efforts to build bridges with the international community as a whole. It is also frequently difficult to explain why IOM is not present in the country, so registration would help to normalize the operating environment. It would also be significant if the Uzbeks let bygones be bygones and paved the way for a former Andijon-related antagonist to resume operations.

NORLAND